

# Boss Croker's Career.



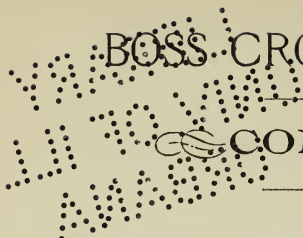
THE CENTRAL POWER.

A REVIEW OF  
THE PUGILISTIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF  
**BILL TWEED'S**  
PUPIL AND SUCCESSOR.

WITH AN APPENDIX.  
Comparing the Croker Ring with the Tweed Ring  
and Urging a Union of all Factions  
Against Tammany Hall.

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# BOSS CROKER'S CAREER.

## *A Review of the Pugilistic and Political Activity of Bill Tweed's Pupil and Successor.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE "CENTRAL POWER" OF NEW YORK.

##### *A Mayoralty Convention in Tammany Hall.*

Tammany Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity by the assembled delegates who had been chosen to represent their respective districts in the Mayoralty convention. It was in the Fall of 1892. There was at that time but one local faction whose nomination (conceded to be equivalent to an election) was worth striving for. It was the nomination of Tammany Hall. The citizens of New York, without regard to party, were therefore deeply interested in the choice of the Wigwam. The day for the nomination had arrived, but with it came no definite indication as to the person who would be selected. It was generally supposed, however, that Mayor Hugh J. Grant would be renominated.

The hour for opening the meeting had arrived, but the boss and his chief satellites, without whom no one would have attempted to set the machinery of the convention in motion, were still absent. The delay occasioned considerable surprise and speculation among the delegates; their faces assumed a puzzled expression, and in timid undertones they chatted about the situation. "It won't be Grant," "It will be Grant," was bandied to and fro, and was the gist of nearly all the remarks that could be overheard.

##### *The "Slate" Cut and Dried Behind the Scenes.*

In the course of private conversation a few of the bolder spirits ventured cautiously and half apologetically to suggest the feasibility of naming some other man than Grant, but all such prefer-

ences were accompanied with profuse qualifications, so that they might not, in any contingency, be regarded as having been intended to disparage the candidacy of any one that would be agreed upon. Apparently, they all wished to shield themselves from being accused later on of the crime of having guessed at the nomination of the wrong man or of having mildly hinted at the desirability of some other nominee. That would have been unpardonable insubordination. To have such a monstrous charge made against a Tammany member and delegate might seriously imperil his future political prospects. So there was not one in that vast assemblage who seemed to regard himself delegated to exercise his individual judgment or to declare either his own independent choice or that of his constituents. There they all sat like obedient schoolboys, patiently awaiting the "slate" that was being cut and dried behind the scenes. When it was finally produced, with the name of Thomas F. Gilroy at the head, a cheer of boisterous and universal acclaim arose from every part of the hall, each delegate eagerly seeking to be conspicuous in being first and loudest to shout approval of the decree of the omnipotent Central Power.

##### *A Humiliating Spectacle.*

The scene was as suggestive as it was humiliating. Here was the regular County Convention, representing the Democratic party of the greatest city in the Union, without a single delegate who would dare to voice his own convictions. There were any number of able men in that body, and a great many possessing independent wealth, but, without exception, they bowed to the inexorable Tammany custom, which provides that self-assertion is treachery, and that slavish subjection alone is loyalty to the organization. The men who

had advocated Hugh J. Grant's renomination, vanished as if by magic, and with wonderful unanimity they all hailed the name of Thomas F. Gilroy as if he had been the original and only choice of the entire delegation. His nomination was ratified without a dissenting vote.

The question at once arises, What power determined the selection of Mr. Gilroy? Was it the Executive Committee of district leaders, who, together with the boss, constitute the governing body of Tammany Hall? At one time it was popularly supposed that this committee, after due deliberation, decided upon the ticket that the organization put in the field; and the deference paid by the delegates to the "slate" that is brought into the convention is partly explained by its respect for the authority of the wise (!) men who constitute that committee.

But, as a matter of fact, the same force that we saw enacted in the convention itself, the same mockery of deliberation and the same timidity of self-assertion, characterize the deliberations of the Executive Committee. No one but the boss has a right to his opinion, and conscience, and, when he utters his wish, the die is cast and the law is proclaimed.

#### *One Man's Absolute Dictation.*

The whole scheme of Tammany Hall politics, consequently, narrows down to and becomes based on the arbitrary will and absolute dictation of one man, known as the boss. This person takes into his confidence one or two subservient district leaders, together with whom he constitutes the innermost wheel of the gigantic and intricate machine. To these confederates he makes known his personal whims, fancies and desires, and they attend to all the rest. In 1892 the boss at the last moment said, "It shall be Gilroy," and at once there was an end to all doubt and discussion. Mr. Gilroy was duly placed in nomination and became Mayor of New York. In the same manner the boss decreed the following year that Fitch and Fellows should be, respectively, nominated for Comptroller and District-Attorney. They were taken out of Congress in pursuance of his order, were elected, and a special election to fill the vacancies thus created entailed a needless expenditure of \$100,000 on the taxpayers, besides causing the loss of one member

of Congress at a critical moment, when the defeat of a Democratic candidate in a strong Democratic district might have seriously affected the fate of the most important Democratic measure since the civil war.

#### *The "Central Power's" Life.*

The person who thus centralizes his own hands the political powers, the mightiest municipality of the nation and on whose individual will and word depend the most vital interests of government, is necessarily a character of general importance, and his personality becomes the legitimate object of special study and investigation.

That person is Richard Croker, boss of Tammany Hall. It is the purpose of these pages, therefore, to paint a faithful picture of his life and political activity.

#### CHAPTER II.

##### BIRTH AND EMIGRATION.

##### *Family Pretensions.*

Richard Croker was born in Blackrock, near Quarters town, County Cork, Ireland, on Nov. 24, 1843. He is the son of Eyre Croot Croker. The story carefully spread by his satellites is that he descends from the family of Henry Croker, of Quarters town, who was a Major and Inspector-General in the British Army. Through him the Crokers trace their pedigree to ancestors of the same name who were people of distinction and renown in Ireland centuries ago. John Dillon Croker, said to be an uncle to Richard, was a member of Parliament for the County Cork and another uncle, Richard Croker, was a captain in the British Army and a one time Governor of Bermuda.

This alleged relationship has caused the Croker family, since its latter-day prosperity and pre-eminence, to take a deep interest in heraldry matters, and after considerable research, the inevitable coat-of-arms has made its appearance, which is now duly displayed on the family stationery and equipages. It bears the suggestive motto, Deus Aliteos (God Feeds Them).

Richard's father was the blacksmith of Roscarberry, his native hamlet, and was noted for certain peculiarities of character which were not calculated to help him in a business way. He had a growing family and a diminishing income, and began to cast yearning glances across the ocean.



*His Early Surroundings in America.*

In 1846 he bundled his humble effects, and after a wearisome voyage in the packet Henry Clay, he landed, in the fall of that year with his wife and seven children, on the hospitable shores of free America. They took up their abode near Ninety-ninth street, on a portion of the old Bloomingdale road which is now within the limits of Central Park. Their first residence in the new world contained no suggestion of the grandeur and elegance which the future had in store for them; on the contrary, it is described as "a rickety two-story structure, surrounded by high rock and a growth of trees and rubbish." The neighborhood was teeming with a class of residents known as "squatters," who were so designated because they settled down on unoccupied land regardless of ownership, and built upon it their temporary and unsightly hovels.

Among his new neighbors, Eyre Croker endeavored to establish himself as a "veterinary surgeon," but his practice did not prove extensive or profitable. After a few years he moved down to East Twenty-sixth street, and from there to Twenty-eighth street.

As Mr. Croker, sr., was not fond of great exertion, and as his boys, George, "Ed" and "Dick," were too young to become bread-winners, so at this time the family was not over-prosperous. Later on, however, old Eyre became an attache of the Thirty-second street stables of the Harlem Car Company. The pecuniary condition of the family was beginning to improve, but it was still far from being regarded as comfortable.

## CHAPTER III.

## HIS EDUCATION, OR LACK OF IT.

*A Plodding Scholar.*

The history of Richard's school days is brief and soon told. He was about twelve years of age when he entered the public school in East Twenty-seventh street, where his attendance was characterized neither by regularity nor by diligence. At the age of fifteen his schooling abruptly terminates, and he is sent into the world with an education that could scarcely be termed rudimentary without exaggeration.

*An Illiterate Man, Yet He Writes for the North American Review.*

At no time since has he attempted to make up for the wasted opportunity of youth. The crudeness of his intellect has not been improved by a course of reading in later life, as in the case of so many self-made American statesmen.

Mr. Croker is an illiterate man. It is doubtful if he ever composed a letter, and, although in his present position it would seem indispensable to him to conduct a voluminous correspondence, few persons can boast of ever having seen him with pen in hand, actually engaged in writing. His desk at Tammany Hall shows no ink stains, for the very obvious reason that its owner can't write, or does not care to commit his thoughts, such as they are, to writing. To suppose that Richard Croker is the real author of the article that appeared over his signature in the North American Review for February, 1892, is as ridiculous as it would be to assume that it was the composition of a Fiji Islander. All his spontaneous interviews are likewise deliberately prepared and edited by his literary assistants, of whom he keeps quite an assortment, and among whom there may be found prominent Congressmen, Judges and other high public officials.

*Eloquent over Horses and Prize-Fighters.*

The proof of his lack of culture is furnished to those around him by his utter incapacity for verbal expression. By that is not meant his inability to make public speeches—he has never made one in his life—but refers rather to his apparently circumscribed range of ideas. He speaks in monosyllables, commands a vocabulary that appears to be limited to about three hundred words and forms his sentences in a way that Lindley Murray would regard with horror. It is possible that when discussing a horse-race, a prize-fight or a political caucus, Mr. Croker would betray some signs of fluency and eloquence, but aside from these favorite subjects his speech is halting and hollow, furnishing an index to a mind that is woefully ill-equipped and verging toward sterility.

A great many persons no doubt imagine that no man could preside over an organization like Tammany Hall without possessing a much higher grade of brain power than that with which Mr. Croker is here credited, and who would be strongly inclined to believe that this description of his intellectual stature does not do him justice.

To suppose, however, that it requires a great intellect to "run" that institution is a serious mistake. The talents needed for distributing spoils, for selecting candidates and for promoting jobs—the three chief functions of a boss—are not necessarily of a nature that only a

university training can supply. Any man of ordinary attainments, with a modicum of "horse sense," would meet the requirements of the place far better than the most erudite college professor.

### *An Ideal Outfit for a Boss.*

That Mr. Croker is a man of a certain degree of tact and judgment, no one will gainsay. Moreover, he has an even temper, "never worries," and never "loses his head." He is also noted for trying to keep his word and for being true to his friends. These are invaluable qualities in a Tammany leader, and go further in making his management a success than he could hope to achieve with the literary ability of a Lowell or the eloquence of a Depew.

The truth of the matter is that an educated man of refined tastes and moral sensibilities would be as much out of place at the head of Tammany Hall as a minister in command of a pirate ship. The process of natural selection by which there came to the surface in successive order such characters as Bill Tweed, John Morrissey, John Kelly and Richard Croker demonstrates that comparative illiteracy, if accompanied with native shrewdness and moral obtuseness, is the ideal outfit for a Tammany boss-ship.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EARLY MANHOOD.

#### *A Typical Tough.*

In relating the story of Mr. Croker's youth and early manhood, we touch the least inspiring and darkest chapter of his checkered career. It is just such a story as might be written about any young man who grows up without mental and spiritual training, without the ennobling influences of home, and without a regular calling.

In every large city, among the different types of character that cosmopolitan life develops, there is one that occupies the border-line between respectability and criminality, the transition from one state to the other being natural, frequent and entirely dependent upon chance. This species is largely recruited from the improvident poor, the ignorant and the irreligious, whose occupation is loafing, whose home is the street, whose Alma Mater is the corner saloon. It comprises the lawless element of society, to regulate and repress which is the chief excuse for the existence of the police.

Thirty to forty years ago, owing to the inefficiency of the Police Department, this element, through its organization into ward gangs, freely terrorized the community, and generally exercised a degrading influence on municipal morals. Mr. Richard Croker developed into a typical representative of these bruiser and bummer brigades, and spent the formative years of his life amid their debasing associations.

#### *Cut Out for a Prize-Fighter.*

Intellectually and physically he was "cut out" for the social atmosphere in which he chose to place himself. He possessed a strong frame, a deep chest, a short neck and a pair of hard fists. Passionately fond of rough and tumble brawls, he could hold his own with the toughest of his cronies. Prize-fighting soon became his pet hobby, and to the pursuit of that sport he devoted all his energies. He became a trainer and backer for professional sluggers, and gradually, by means of his own clever "dukes," he rose to the dignified distinction of a professional fighter himself.

Among the men who were prepared for the prize-ring by Prof. Croker was the noted Pete Maguire. A fistic contest was arranged between him and Abe Hicken, of Philadelphia, a protege of Billy McMullin, of the same city, who was widely famed as a leader of toughs and repeaters. Mr. Croker got up the fight and arranged all the details. It was fought near Baltimore, on Feb. 5, 1863. The friends of both combatants, on the way to the battlefield, met by chance on board of a train, when a fierce scuffle ensued, in which a dozen men were knocked senseless. In the thickest of the melee stood the bold hero of our story dealing "knock-out" blows in all directions.

#### *Becomes a Professional Slugger.*

But Mr. Croker was not content to be merely a second, since he was confident of his power to shine as a principal. His first fistic encounter was supposed to have been with Reddy Haskins in the cellar of a house owned by a certain McNearney. Later he met and vanquished Pat Kelly in a saloon at the corner of Thirty-fifth street and Third avenue. An important match was next arranged for Mr. Croker for a "finish" fight with "Owney" Geoghegan, who had a record, but it fell through.

Mr. Croker's best-known battle is the one he fought with "Dickie" Lynch in Jones's Wood, on a Sunday morning in 1866. Lynch was a famous fighter, yet in that memorable contest he was badly pounded, and carried from the

ng minus several front teeth. Mr. Croker also "knocked out" Matt Green and Denny Leary, but the precise dates of these meetings have not been preserved.

Mr. Croker has had many a bloody brawl outside of the prize ring. A great number of local sports still recall the fierce "shindy" in Jim Cusick's rat-and-dog pit on the west side. Cusick was known as the "Man Eater," and had the reputation of being able to kill more rats with his mouth in an hour than any dog could in a day. On one occasion Croker's dog was matched to fight Cusick's dog. The pit was packed with the backers of both kinds of dogs—the two-legged as well as the four-legged ones.

When Croker's was getting to be the under dog, the excitement became intense. The men went to the aid of their cadrapruds with fists. A general battle followed. For three-quarters of an hour both species of brutes bit, gouged and lunched each other promiscuously. When the smoke of the scuffle cleared away the bloody pit was seen to be strewn with parts of human ears and pieces of human fingers.

#### *The Idol of Bullies and Blacklegs.*

Mr. Croker's growing fame as a fighter made him the idol of the bullies and blacklegs who infested the vicinity of the fourth avenue tunnel. Near its entrance stood the old freight depot of the Harlem Railroad. Teamsters, hackmen, mechanics, railroad hands and many others connected with the handling of freight made the neighborhood a bustling centre for industrious persons. Such men were apt to have some money in their pockets, and wherever they congregated they will be sure to attract a flock of urban vultures.

The vicinity of the tunnel, therefore, became the objective point of as tough and desperate a set of rowdies as could be found anywhere in the city. Sneak-thieves, garroters, burglars and highwaymen were there in choice variety. As "birds of a feather" it did not take them long to find a common rendezvous, and, in pursuance of the gregarious instinct of man, these choice spirits decided to "flock together," their organization becoming known to fame as the "Fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang."

#### CHAPTER V.

#### LEADER OF THE GANG.

##### *Fists His Way to Leadership.*

Mr. Richard Croker was destined by virtue of his peculiar endowments to become the leader of the Fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang, as he was later fated to be, in consequence of the same qualities, to leadership in our local govern-

ment. But unlike the city of New York, the members of the gang never gave themselves up to Mr. Croker's absolute sway. He had to fist his way over every inch of ground in his struggle for supremacy, and his triumphal path to the captaincy was strewn with scores of rivals who had been made to bite the dust.

There was only one gentleman whose rivalry caused Mr. Croker any serious unpleasantness, and that man was "Ed" Quigley. Mr. Quigley was more than a match for Mr. Croker. Tradition reports that Quigley was a "giant in strength and a tyrant in disposition," and could toy with his competitor as "a cat with a mouse." Quigley, it is further alleged, was in the habit of "kicking the present Tammany boss from one street corner to another." Unfortunately for the future course of municipal history, Quigley was one day found in the tunnel with both legs cut off by a train.

With the most dangerous opponent out of the way, only the "Riley boys" were left to dispute the title of leadership with Mr. Croker. The Rileys, as the gang historian relates, had a regular custom of "wiping up" the pavements of Third avenue with "Dick," but as they were more inclined to industry than to professional rowdiness (one of them having been the section foreman on the Harlem Railroad), they surrendered the field to their zealous and determined antagonist, and Mr. Croker was soon proudly acknowledged by all his congeners to be their only guide, philosopher and master.

##### *Hell's Hole, the Gang Headquarters.*

A saloon at the corner of Twenty-sixth street and Fourth avenue was the headquarters of the Tunnel Gang. It is not remembered by what appellation the place was designated, but if there ever was a spot on earth that deserved to be known as "Hell's Hole," it was located right at that corner. The choicest products of the slums were drawn thither as the needle is drawn to the pole. It became the Mecca towards which the minions of vice and crime irresistibly gravitated. From there emanated all the more important attacks then made on the law, order and decency of the city. Cock-fights, prize-fights, larcenies, personal assaults and all sorts of depredations were conceived and executed by the frequenters of that horrible hostelry.

The Twenty-first Ward was completely at the mercy of these ruffians, who introduced a veritable reign of terror. Inoffensive citizens were brutally assaulted and robbed daily. Of these dastardly attacks by the members of the Tunnel Gang we recall the following three instances:



*Croker and His Slung-Shot.*

An assault on Christopher Pullman, a leading Republican politician, who was knocked senseless at the corner of Thirty-second street and Second avenue in 1868, receiving injuries from which he never recovered.

An assault on Dorman B. Eaton, who, though still alive to tell the story, was brought close to death's door at the time; and, lastly, the assault on James Moore, by Mr. Croker in person, a report of which is luckily preserved to us in the New York Times of Sept. 8, 1871, and reads as follows:

*Croker Assaults James Moore.*

"On last Tuesday evening, Sept. 5, about 8.45 P. M., ex-Alderman Richard Croker, of the Twenty-first Ward, who is the leader of the St. Patrick's Alliance (Dick Connolly's secret organization in that ward), with the assistance of another individual, who can be identified by parties who were present, assaulted a man named James Moore with a slung-shot, knocking him down and then kicking him, at the corner of Thirty-first street and Third avenue. The ex-Alderman is now holding a sinecure position under Dick Connolly, and is occasionally appointed as a commissioner on street openings. He is also the individual who put in a bid for Washington Market (it is supposed) as a blind for 'Slippery Dick.'"

*Leads a Gang of Repeaters.*

One of the most lucrative enterprises for the gangs in those days was the wholesale repeating business. Every leader of a well-organized ward gang commanded a good price by contracting to hire out his followers on election day. Mr. Croker probably obtained his first impressions of the science of government as chieftain of the Tunnel Gang, in charging, at their head, upon the ballot-boxes of New York and other cities. Among his confreres were such men as Mike Norton, Florry Scannell, Reddy the Blacksmith and "Red" Leary, the noted burglar. History has not left unrecorded his efforts in this elevating field of political activity. By turning to the New York Tribune of Oct. 13, 1868, we shall find a most interesting account of one of Mr. Croker's repeating expeditions. The report reads as follows:

*Dick Croker's Bandits.*

"New York City was fast emptied of many of her roughs yesterday. Their ugly countenances were seen congregating around the Camden and Amboy Railroad depot all bound for Philadelphia. These roughs and bullies are

the repeaters who intend to swell the Democratic vote in Philadelphia to-day, providing they are not apprehended. They have been recruited in almost every ward in the city, and each delegation is headed by a prominent 'striker,' who is to receive the lion's share of the funds. \* \* \* Among them were members of the 'Pudding Gang from the Swamp' in the Fourth Ward; the 'Dead Rabbits' Crowd,' from the Five Points and Mulberry street, in the Sixth Ward; the 'Old White Ghost Runners,' from the Tenth Ward; the 'Old Rock Rangers,' in the Fourteenth Ward, and a large number of 'Mackerelites,' 'Hookites,' 'Fungtown and Bungtown Rangers' and a number of other organized bands of toughs. \* \* \*

Last, but not least, were 150 Metropolitan Bandits, under the notorious Dick Croker, all well armed and spoiling for fight. They hail from the Twenty-first Ward. Fully five thousand of the most hardened desperadoes of this city are now in Philadelphia."

It is further recorded that on the day after this exodus occurred "nobody was robbed or assaulted in New York, nobody had his pockets picked, the police had little or nothing to do and the police courts were idle."

A fervent prayer was uttered that Philadelphia might regard "those interesting classes of our population, who added variety, if not attractiveness, to her election, as a permanent loan."

## CHAPTER VI.

## BECOMES A POLITICIAN.

*Among the Fire Laddies.*

On Dec. 28, 1864, Mr. Croker joined the Volunteer Fire Department, Engine No. 28, located at Fourth avenue and Twenty-seventh street. The Fire Department at that date played a very important part in city politics, and active membership was the stepping-stone to a political career. The engine-houses were in most cases a kind of club-room, where for pastime the members indulged in a low order of amusements and discussed politics. Bitter feuds and frequent fights between rival companies attracted all lovers of rough excitement, so that Mr. Croker, with his fistic abilities and brute courage, was in his right element among the fire laddies.

Bill Tweed was then foreman of the "Americus" engine, and was known all over the city as "Big Six." The Fire Department had proved to him a royal road to political advancement. The entire "b'hoy" element began to look up to him with admiration, and to follow in his footsteps. Like him, they aban-



ligned all thought of legitimate business, and turned their attention wholly to politics as a means of livelihood. In this way thousands of worthless scamps and incompetent demagogues were drawn into the political whirlpool, and helped to build up that gigantic system of corruption known in history as the Tweed ring.

#### *Croker Impressed with Tweed's Rise to Power.*

In the school of politico-criminal statesmanship thus founded there was a humble disciple in the person of Fireman Croker. He watched the growing influence of Boss Tweed, and noted the increasing political value of a following among the rough element. A change was coming over the aspect of municipal affairs. The respectable element that had previously held office was being driven to the wall. Political power was rapidly slipping from the hands of responsible citizens, and was being seized by those who entered politics in a spirit of adventure and purely for the purpose of spoliation.

Mr. Richard Croker began his political career while this revolution was in progress. His young mind obtained its first impressions of politics amid influences and surroundings that were not only intensely selfish, but positively immoral and unpatriotic. He saw Tweed's figure loom up in portentous magnitude from a common fireman to an almighty ruler, whose sphere of action embraced the whole city and was beginning to extend over the State. The effect of this metamorphosis on Mr. Croker's imagination was just what might have been expected. It implanted the germ of an ambition that would some day tempt him also to assume the role of a supreme Tammany boss.

#### *A Thieves' Paradise.*

The example of Tweed's phenomenal rise to power and the success which attended his peculiar political methods had its inevitable effect on men and methods. The body politic became thoroughly honeycombed with corruption.

The taxpayer was regarded by the ring as a legitimate prize, to be stripped of all his possessions, just as brigand regards his captive victim. Everybody was bent on lining his own pockets at the public expense, and thousands sought office to share in the wholesale plunder. Tweed shrewdly yielded to this pressure and allowed the city payrolls to be length-

ened without limit. Whole regiments were appointed to hold sinecure positions, and drew their pay regularly without doing any service in return. It seemed as if New York city had become a thieves' paradise.

#### *Croker has His Name Placed on the Pay-Rolls.*

Mr. Richard Croker, observing how one after another of his comrades in the engine-house obtained a lucrative appointment, finally made up his mind to seek a soft berth for himself. He applied to the well-known James O'Brien, the popular leader of his district. Mr. O'Brien promptly complied by having Mr. Croker's name placed on the salary-list as a court officer. He was ostensibly assigned to Judge Barnard's court, but in reality was free from all service, together with a score of other attaches. Among the names that figured on the salary-roll of the same court besides that of Mr. Croker were those of Florence Scannell and the present Mayor, Thomas F. Gilroy.

Under such circumstances did Mr. Croker become a professional politician and enter upon a career that was destined to make him the "Central Power" of New York City, and one of the most powerful men in the country.

#### CHAPTER VII.

#### ELECTED ALDERMAN.

##### *The Goal of His Ambition.*

The class of politicians to which Mr. Croker then belonged generally regarded a membership in the Board of Aldermen as the goal towards which all exertion should be directed, and to become a full-fledged Alderman was to attain the very zenith of political renown. This ambition seized the soul of our hero, and again he turned to his friend and leader, O'Brien, for assistance.

In 1867, O'Brien, while serving a term as Alderman, was elected Sheriff, and the vacancy thus caused was filled at a special election, held in December, 1868, by the elevation of Richard Croker to the dignity of Aldermanship. He was sworn into office and took his seat on Dec. 20, 1869. The same year he was re-elected for a full term, but was legislated out of office by the Tweed Charter, serving only until June, 1870. Mr. Croker drew \$4,000 a year as Alderman, and at the same time drew another salary of \$1,200 as court officer. This double-salary performance is duly recorded in the Comptroller's report for 1869.

During the short period of his activity as a legislator he afforded us a perfect opportunity to gauge his political character. If we may judge of the present by the past—if the Boss represents but a development of the economic ideas of the

Aldermen—a flood of light will be thrown on the system of municipal control under Tammany Hall that will make things that have appeared strange seem very natural.

### *Lavish with the Taxpayer's Money.*

It will no longer be surprising to know that the tendency to extravagance, jobbery, waste and corruption characteristic of Tammany rule to this day is an inherited disease, and is derived from Mr. Croker's own experiences and exertions as an Alderman.

He had hardly taken his seat in 1869 when we find him voting for a resolution to raise the salaries of the District Court Justices "to the level of these received by the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas!" His next move is a vote to provide the Aldermen and the Police Justices with some "badge, insignia or stave of office." The Police Justices and their clerks are not sufficiently compensated, in his judgment, so he votes "aye" on the question to fix the Police Justices' salary "at the same rate as is now paid to the City Judge, and that the salary of each Police Justices' clerk be fixed at five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per annum, and the salary of each of the Police Court clerks be fixed at four thousand dollars (\$4,000) per annum."

Voting for increases of salary kept him quite busy. Here is a small list of those whom he helped to a salary grab:

- Assistant Librarian.
- Messenger to Librarian.
- First Marshal, Mayor's office.
- Clerk to Superintendent of Lands and Places.
- General Clerk, Board of Assistant Aldermen.
- Eighth Assistant Clerk, Board of Aldermen.
- Readers to Board of Aldermen.
- Readers to Board of Assistant Aldermen.
- Regulator of Public Clocks.
- Second Clerk, Bureau of Street Improvement.
- Assistant Clerks to Board of Aldermen.

### *Votes for Patent-Pavement Jobs.*

But increasing salaries was one of the milder forms of extravagance. Money was voted liberally for experimental paving contracts, every one of which was a job. There were over a dozen different patent pavement companies, and all of

them were permitted to take a whack at the treasury. Among the preferred ones were the Fisk, Stow, Stafford, Robbins Nicholson and Paul companies. They received from \$5 to \$6 per square yard mostly for wooden pavements that were dear at \$2. Mayor Hall vetoed most of the paving ordinances, but the board passed them over the veto in every instance. Here is an extract from one of his veto messages, dated Feb. 21, 1870:

"\* \* \* carefully examined the manner in which it (Stow foundation wood pavement), was laid down. Though only sixty days old, it is already full of depressions, and the arch of the street is so changed that water is liable to stand in pools. The Mayor is not informed whether one property holder on the line of the numerous streets embraced by the annexed resolutions has asked for these experimental pavements. On the contrary, the Mayor has before him emphatic remonstrances against the pavement."

These earnest words availed nothing. Mr. Croker and his colleagues kept up to the end the practice of making the taxpayers liable for worthless paving contracts.

### *Indulges in Expensive Jokes.*

Another expensive joke in which Alderman Croker steadily participated, was the habit of appointing fictitious newspapers as "corporation papers," to publish the proceedings of the Common Council and public notices and advertisements. A list of those so designated will show at a glance that there was "money in it" for some one:

- Emerald,
  - Irish People,
  - Irish Tribune,
  - Evening Mail,
  - New York Era,
  - The Stockholder,
  - New York Argus,
  - New York Courier,
  - Skandinavisk Post,
  - National Guardsman,
  - New Yorker Demokrat,
  - Harlem Evening Times,
  - New York Official Railroad News,
  - Insurance and Real Estate Journal.
- It was during Mr. Croker's term, and with his vote, that the New York Printing Company (of which Tweed was the principal stockholder, and which paid a dividend of \$50,000 to \$75,000 to each of its members on a capital stock of \$10,000)

as designated printers to the corporation, and the Controller was directed to pay its bills when certified by the clerks of the respective boards of the Common council.

### *Sells His Soul Into Political Bondage.*

But Mr. Croker's brief Aldermanic career has a worse stain, if that were possible, than the mere suspicion that he was dishonest. There is proof that he violated his oath to the people—that he sold his very soul into political bondage. In agreement which he signed is almost unparalleled in our political history. Let the document speak for itself:

"The undersigned, Aldermen of the City and County of New York, being solemnly and severally sworn, do depose and say that they will not, in their official capacity as Aldermen, vote for the confirmation of any officer created under the provisions of the city charter or any laws of this State, or adopt any ordinance or resolution affecting the powers, duties and interests of any municipal department of said city or county government, without consulting with Messrs. Henry H. Genet, Thomas J. Creamer, Michael Norton, George W. McLean and George H. Purser, and first obtaining the consent of said last-named gentlemen to any contemplated act.

"Sworn to before me this 20th day of March, 1870.

"JOEL O. STEVENS,  
"Commissioner of Deeds."

This was signed by Richard Croker and eight other Aldermen. It may be called the original "combine," and no doubt served as a model for the famous "Boodle" Board of 1884.

### *A Black Record.*

Space prevents us from going into more extended examination of Mr. Croker's Aldermanic record. It is easy to infer what it was in its entirety from the distinguishing features just enumerated. It is a record like that left behind by hundreds of mediocre, incompetent and conscienceless Councilmen, who have their brief day of glory and grab and then sink into eternal and deserved obscurity. There is not a scintilla of reason why Mr. Croker's fate should have been any different from theirs. His legislative activity had not a single redeeming trait; it was as black as the complete utilization of his opportunities could make it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DURING THE TWEED RING.

#### *Wants a Finger in the Pie.*

When the city of New York was at the mercy of Tweed and his ring of common thieves Mr. Croker looked on that saturnalia of municipal debauchery, not like a citizen who feels that his outraged rights call for resentment, but rather like one whose indignation is aroused by being prevented from putting his own itching fingers into the pie. He made haste to connect at some point where the treasury was being tapped through secret channels, and a month after the legal extinguishment of his Aldermanic dignity we find him securely ensconced in the office of "Superintendent of Market Rents and Fees" under Ring Comptroller Richard B. Connolly, and by virtue of his appointment.

There existed a market ring, which was Connolly's own side enterprise. It was a "wheel within a wheel," and was considered a big bonanza. Stall-keepers were mercilessly swindled, and jobs of every variety were put up to extort money both from the city and the marketmen. The market ring was in immediate charge of Supts. Carroll and Feore, two choice appointees of Connolly. On one occasion Feore was pressed for an assessment. He excused his payment of it on the ground that it cost him \$3,000 to secure his appointment. He was then charged with "making \$50,000 a year," to which he promptly replied that even if he did there was very little left for himself, as he was continually bled and paid money regularly to several persons, among whom were Senators Genet and Mike Norton.

#### *Chummy with Two Stick Specimens of Tweedism.*

There is no evidence that Mr. Croker and Mr. Tweed were well known to each other, but, on the other hand, he was intimately acquainted with his superior in office, Connolly, and was more than "chummy" with "Prince Harry" Genet. These two men were his particular friends during the halcyon days of the ring, and their relations were close and confidential. If a man's political character can be influenced by that of his associates, then Mr. Croker must have acquired some very bad habits from two of the slickest specimens that Tweedism ever produced.



Connolly and Genet could have posed as typical models for a statue of "The Corruptor in American Politics." Both were steeped up to their necks in the thefts of the time; both were capable of the meanest kind of public robbery. Connolly had a house, stable and surroundings finished by Ring Contractor Garvey, for which the latter presented and had honored by the Comptroller seven warrants amounting to \$19,000. Genet had a private residence and stable built at a cost to the city of \$125,000 by the contractor who erected the Harlem Court House. The same Genet, as a convicted felon, escaped from the custody of the Sheriff, for which Brennan was punished by thirty days' imprisonment. It was a common thing for ring contractors to perform work and supply materials to leading ring members and their families, and present their bills to the city authorities.

#### *Connolly's Millions Transferred.*

Mr. Croker's friend, Connolly, developed into one of the richest ringsters. When the storm broke, he was the first to weaken, and quietly began to dispose of his ill-gotten wealth. On Sept. 6, 1871, two days after the appointment of the Committee of Seventy, his wife transferred half a million of United States registered bonds to his son-in-law, Joel Fithian, for safety, yet still retained three and a half millions of the same securities. Connolly was anxious to "peach" on his pals, and made overtures to Mr. Tilden to that effect. His motto evidently was "Immunity for myself at any price." All these happenings were no doubt carefully noted by Mr. Croker, who may have had intuitive premonitions of similar personal experiences in the distant future.

When the crash and scattering of the famous Tweed Ring came Mr. Croker lost his place in the public market, and retired for a time to the classic surroundings of a Twenty-first Ward tough. He rested for two years until the storm blew over, and then, having formed an intimacy with John Kelly, the coming Tammany boss, he secured the nomination and was elected Coroner in 1873.

#### *A Perfect Product of the Spoils System.*

Mr. Croker's subsequent political career, up to the time he was made The Boss, in 1886, is without any dis-

tinguishing characteristics. As Coroner for two terms, as Marshal for the collection of personal taxes, as Fire Commissioner and as City Chamberlain, he is an indifferent official, without special aptitude, originality or executive ability.

Like the many unknown thousands who get into office as a reward for political services, whose only qualification is their power to command votes on election day, so is Mr. Croker a mere creature of the spoils system. He possesses sufficient native wit to adapt himself to the ordinary routine of any place he may fall into, and to draw his salary with due punctuality, but that is all there is to the man, and that is all that is to be expected of him. As a statesman and guardian of the public weal he would be a lamentable failure.

#### CHAPTER IX.

#### CHARGED WITH MURDER.

##### *The O'Brien and Croker Feud.*

Early on election morning, Nov. 4, 1874, the following despatch was received at Police Headquarters:

"At 7.40 A. M. an altercation took place at Second avenue and Thirty-fourth street between Richard Croker, John Sheridan, Henry Hickey, James O'Brien and John McKenna. McKenna was shot in right side of head; fatal wound; taken to Bellevue."

This fight and murder was the culmination of a bitter feud between ex-Sheriff O'Brien and Richard Croker. As previously noted, Mr. Croker owed his entrance into politics and his first election as Alderman to his friend, O'Brien. The Tweed charter had abolished the old Board of Aldermen, and called for a new election in May, 1870. Mr. Croker wanted to succeed himself, but O'Brien nominated Bernard O'Neill, one of his deputy sheriffs. Mr. Croker claimed that O'Brien had promised him a renomination, and accused the latter of having acted in bad faith. That was the cause and beginning of their enmity. Mr. Croker tried hard to oust O'Brien from the leadership in the Twenty-first Ward. He started the Tammany Association in East Twenty-first street to oppose the Jackson Club, which was the headquarters of O'Brien's Young Democracy.

##### *Croker Starts a Row.*

At the election in question O'Brien was a candidate for Congress, being opposed by Abram S. Hewitt. Mr. Croker, who was a Coroner at the time, had charge of his district for Tammany Hall. He started out early to make the

ounds of the polling-places in company with a set of armed bruisers, two of whom, at least, had police records for having been in shooting scrapes. They set a number of O'Brienites in the street. Mr. Croker accosted them. To quote his own language from the witness-stand, he said:

"If you thieves don't get out of this district you'll all fetch up in State prison." O'Brien, of course, happened to be around, and rushed to the spot. The two andied epithets for a moment, and then struck at each other. O'Brien shouted: "I don't want any repeaters around here like you." Mr. Croker retorted classically: "We don't want any — suckers and loafers around here." To quote from Mr. Croker's testimony again: "Then I hauled off and hit him again. \* \* \* O'Brien struck me at the side of the head. I am very sure I struck him twice in the teeth."

### *McKenna Gaped: "Dick Croker Shot Me."*

In the midst of the scuffle between the two a shot was heard, and John McKenna, a worker for O'Brien, who had jumped forward to interfere, fell to the ground with a bullet in his head. A fusillade followed from half a dozen revolvers. Officer John Smythe carried McKenna to a drugstore. McKenna gasped: "Dick Croker shot me."

At the station-house Mr. Croker entered a charge of assault against O'Brien, and the latter accused Croker of murder. Coroner Woltman let his colleague go under nominal bail.

At the trial before the Coroner's jury, Mr. Croker had all the advantages that political influence could exert. Boss John Kelly attended each session, and was several times accompanied by Mayor-Elect William H. Wickham. The papers dubbed it "John Kelly's Inquest." Col. Fellows represented the accused, who was amply protected besides by Mr. Woltman himself. Horace Russell acted for the District-Attorney, and several times characterized "the privileges that had been granted the accused person as scandalizing the administration of justice."

### *Damaging Testimony.*

The testimony was conflicting. Several witnesses affirmed that they saw Mr. Croker, with the pistol in his hand, fire the shot; others denied it.

One of the witnesses, Sergt. Frank B. Randall, testified as follows:

"I found John McKenna in the drug store. I knew him and said: 'Johnny, how did this happen?' He answered, 'Dick Croker shot me.' I asked him to tell me all about it, as it was my business to know. He said: 'I saw O'Brien and Croker quarrelling and I ran in and

Croker shot me, and then after that George Hickey fired two shots at me.' After a little while McKenna said: 'Oh, you cowardly wretch, Dick Croker, to shoot me.' I saw Officer Smythe and said: 'You being stationed here, ought to know about this.' He replied, 'I do know. I saw Croker strike O'Brien and shoot at him. The revolver was so close that the powder burnt my ear.'"

Another witness, Sergt. William H. Chrystie, testified that Officer Smythe, who brought in Croker and the Hickeys, said that he saw Croker hit O'Brien and fire two shots at him.

The Coroner's verdict, which surprised no one, was as follows:

"The jury find that John McKenna came to his death from a pistol-shot wound in the head by the hand of some party to the jury unknown."

### *Mr. Dana's Sun Warns New Yorkers.*

There was considerable indignation over this verdict. The public did not believe there was a fair trial. This sentiment was forcibly expressed in a leading editorial of the New York Sun on Nov. 14, 1874. It makes good reading even to this day:

"The verdict of the Coroner's jury in the McKenna case will go far to confirm the apprehensions which we repeatedly expressed before the election, of the danger of giving to Tammany Hall the complete control of the city. \* \* \* The shadow of Tammany Hall was in that court-room—the room where the Coroner's investigation took place. The feeling will be that it was cast over that inquest to protect violence and shield murder. Is it for such base uses, such dangerous ends that the political organization of Tammany at present exists? Are the dagger and the pistol to be the emblems of its power? Then no man in New York is safe."

Four days later Mr. Croker was indicted by the Grand Jury. As he passed to his cell in Murderers' Row, a familiar voice called out to him: "Hello, Dick." It was the voice of his friend, John Scannell. "How are you, John?" replied Mr. Croker. Their mutual misfortune awakened a bond of sympathy which has not since been severed.

### *Croker Tried for Murder Before Judge Barrett.*

Mr. Croker's trial before Judge Barrett, in the Court of Oyer and Terminer, resulted in a disagreement. After seventeen hours' deliberation the jury found itself equally divided, and were discharged. Later it was ascertained that of the six who believed that Croker was guilty, three only were of the opinion that he fired the shot designedly, while the other three believed he hit McKenna accidentally.

The question as to who killed McKenna, therefore, remains a mystery to this day. There are several men who profess to know the real murderer, and there are others, men of excellent repute, such as ex-Mayors Hewitt and Cooper, who claim to have satisfied themselves that Mr. Croker is entirely innocent. Be that as it may, Mr. Croker can never escape the grave imputation that it was through his instrumentality, if not by his own deed, that a life was sacrificed on that memorable election day. On this point we must hear the authoritative voice of Judge Barrett, as expressed in his charge to the jury. The Judge said:

"There are some facts about which there is no conflict, and one of them is this: It is an undoubted fact that the very origin of the affair, the absolute commencement of it, all emanated from the prisoner himself—that is, he, in company with the two Hickeys and Sheridan, met Borst and Costello. He threatened Borst, substantially directed him to get out of the district; told him if he didn't do so he would get into State prison. Now, that was the origin of the affair. It commenced at that point and I am bound to say to you that the prisoner had no right to take any such position as to Borst. We have no evidence that either Borst or Costello had done any act of violence that morning to justify any such species of hectoring on the part of the defendant. \* \* \* Now, it is also an undoubted fact that Borst and Costello and the two O'Briens were unarmed. It is equally an undoubted fact that the two Hickeys and Sheridan, who were in the immediate company of the prisoner, were armed."

Mr. Croker was never brought to a second trial. The indictment was nolle-prosequed.

## CHAPTER X.

### BOSS OF TAMMANY HALL.

#### *First in the Line of Promotion.*

Mr. Croker had now passed through every degree required in the preparatory course for a Tammany diploma of leadership. He had been successively a thug, prize-fighter, repeater, sinecurist, Alderman and, as a crowning glory, was under ball for "killing his man." What was more natural therefore than that when his friend John Kelly died, in 1886, this distinguished scholar and grad-

uate of the Tammany College should be considered first in the line of promotion, and instinctively selected, on the theory of the survival of the fittest, to step into Kelly's shoes as Chief Boss and Boodle Bearer of "de organization."

Mr. Croker started in cautiously and conservatively. He did not at first "show his hand." No one knew better than he did that Tammany Hall was still suffering from the odium that Tweed had brought upon it. To make Tammany a power again in New York City affairs it was necessary to conciliate and win back the respectable elements of the Democracy. To regain the confidence of the taxpayers Tammany would have to make sham pretensions to economy and public morality. It was under this mask that Mr. Croker proposed to lead the "old guard" back to the promised land of milk and honey.

#### *The Big Four.*

In furtherance of the shrewd game he was playing, Mr. Croker surrounded himself with three men who respectively possessed qualities that he lacked—ability, in the person of Bourke Cockran; comparative respectability, in the person of Hugh J. Grant, and practicability, in the person of Thomas F. Gilroy. Together they constituted "The Big Four," and as long as they harmonized all their plans worked smoothly. They succeeded in imposing themselves on the public as conscientious reformers, and as Tammany men of a better type than their predecessors.

In 1888 Mr. Grant, who failed to vote for the Broadway Railroad franchise—because he favored another scheme—was nominated for Mayor on a reform (!) platform. His election was the first substantial victory for Tammany in many a year. With the Mayoralty as an entering wedge it did not take long for the remnants of the old crew to pick out the snug berths they had once before occupied, so that as early as 1889 we find "the fag ends and tailing" of the Tweed gang back in control of the Government of New York city.

#### *The Democratic State Machine "Combine."*

About this time the "machine" Democrats were making headway in the State. Gov. Hill was in the executive chair at Albany, having captured it at the expense of Mr. Cleveland's defeat for the Presidency. An era of "deals" and corruption was inaugurated at the capital. Edward Murphy, Jr., chairman



of the Democratic State Committee; William F. Sheehan, Speaker of the Assembly, together with Boss Croker and the Governor, had formed a political and business partnership. It was the most powerful combination since the days of the Albany regency, without its unusual ability and its comparative integrity.

The "combine" was aggressive, unscrupulous and dishonest. In 1891 it stole the State Senate and elected David B. Hill United States Senator. In 1892 it elected its tools to the Governorship and Lieutenant-Governorship, and gained absolute control of the State administration. In 1893 it sent "Ed" Murphy to the United States Senate, to be a vest-pocket attachment to the senior Senator from New York. It was during this period that the whole system of the Democratic organization was perverted to give a fraudulent expression to the choice of the Democratic voters for President.

#### *Messrs. Croker and Murphy Supplant the Lobby.*

The growing power of the combine was now principally directed to the exploiting of the Legislature. Mr. Croker and Mr. Murphy pooled their issues, and together became interested in such legislation as involved their own financial enterprises, as well as those measures which they bargained to pass as party bosses, by contracting to deliver the party vote in the Legislature in return for alleged campaign contributions. They perfected a system by which corporations could obtain valuable public franchises without provision for adequate return to the public treasury; by which they could be guaranteed the passage of favorable measures and of immunity from legislative "strikes." The lobby, as a means of bribery, was simply superseded by the managers of the party in power. All persons and corporations interested in legislation were served with notice that they were no longer to pay tribute to the Black Horse Cavalry. Messrs. Murphy and Croker were henceforth to take care of all that kind of business.

#### *"Turns Down" the Disobedient and Bosses Everything.*

Mr. Croker, as boss, introduced various other startling changes. It is since his assumption of control that the practice has been established of issuing instruc-

tions from Fourteenth street to every class of office-holders, and making advancement depend on obedience. The refractory must expect to be "turned down." This system of discipline has made the Tammany boss an absolute autocrat under our Government. No one can obtain an office without his consent; no one can perform its duties without submitting to his supervision. Public men must have no conscience, no policy, no judgment, no will, except such as the boss dictates or sanctions. Yet that boss rules without having been chosen by the people, and without having taken an oath of fidelity, and without the necessity of rendering an account. That is Jeffersonian Democracy as interpreted by Tammany Hall.

#### *Two Fatal Blunders Which the "Boys" Will Not Forgive.*

Two serious blunders have been committed by Boss Croker, from the effects of which the organization will not recover for many a year. In both instances he was led into the commission of his mistakes through his entanglement with and friendship for "Ed" Murphy.

In the late Presidential campaign Mr. Croker had the opportunity, by putting himself in line with the prevailing sentiment of the national Democracy, to come in for a large share of credit for Mr. Cleveland's election. Influenced by Mr. Murphy, he cast his lot with David B. Hill, and dragged the organization down to defeat with the collapse of the "peanut" statesman's boom. If Tammany is now out in the cold in matters of Federal patronage, it is entirely due to Mr. Croker's folly and shortsightedness.

His second great error consisted in his preference of "Ed" Murphy over Bourke Cockran for the Senatorship. It was the first time in its long history that Tammany Hall had the chance of being represented in the United States Senate by one of its own active members—a man of rare intellectual gifts and brilliant oratorical ability. Here was an opportunity to rehabilitate Tammany and to raise it in the estimation of the whole nation.

#### *Will He Be "Turned Down" Too?*

Nothing could have happened that would have done it as effectually. Boss Croker, however, bound up in commercial and political schemes with his friend from Troy, was obliged to bow to the lat-

ter's ambitious caprice. Thus were thrown away golden opportunities, that come only once in the course of any man's boss-ship, for strengthening and solidifying Tammany Hall.

Boss Croker did not maintain harmonious relations with "The Big Four." He quarrelled with and "turned down" both Grant and Cockran, and signs are not wanting that he is now at sword's points with Mayor Gilroy and other leaders. It is only a question of time before his own followers, angered and aroused at the manner in which they have been duped and misled, will try their own skill at the game of "turning down."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FASSETT INVESTIGATION.

#### *Reviving the Tweed Ring.*

During the legislative session of 1890 a committee of the State Senate, headed by J. Sloat Fassett, was appointed to investigate the management of cities, and devoted particular attention to New York. The committee was fairly on the road to unearth some of the more startling evils of Tammany misrule, when there was consummated between the bosses of the opposing "machines" one of those "deals" which makes men lose faith in human integrity. But, fortunately, the investigation had proceeded sufficiently to make one fact apparent to the people—namely, that the "New Tammany," which had been masquerading as an honest party, was in reality reviving the practices of the old Tweed ring, and that its new boss had set up in business for himself, at the old stand, in the old-fashioned way. This information was alone worth the price of the whole investigation.

The witness, through whose testimony the public obtained a peep behind the Tammany scenes, was one Patrick H. McCann, Mr. Croker's own brother-in-law. The two men had been engaged in a family row. Though pique may have colored McCann's story, it has about it so much of inherent probability that few thoughtful people will be willing to condemn it as "cut out of whole cloth." Mr. Croker came all the way from Europe to deny it, with the exception of a trifle concerning Mayor Grant's \$10,000 gift. Whatever may have been the disposition of the public then in preferring to believe the one or the other, there is no doubt now, since further light has been shed on Mr. Croker's methods, that McCann's statements have gained immensely in credibility.

#### *McCann's Revelations.*

Mr. McCann swore that some time in December, 1884, Mr. Croker came to his store in Eighth avenue with \$180,000 in bills in his possession. Mr. Croker told him the money was to be used in securing the confirmation of Hugh J. Grant as Commissioner of Public Works by the Board of Aldermen. A stakeholder was needed who would be acceptable to the Aldermen that were to be bribed. A man by the name of Tom Adams had been suggested, and Mr. Croker came around to find out what McCann thought of Adams.

#### *The Booodle in the Bag.*

Q. Did Mr. Croker ever go to your store, having with him a sum of money and telling you that that was the amount of money that had been raised for the purpose of securing sufficient votes in the Board of Aldermen to confirm Mr. Grant?

The witness—Yes.

By Mr. Ivins:

Q. You say yes; did you see the money?

A. Yes.

Q. This was in your own house? A. My store. The money was in a satchel.

Q. Did he show you the satchel? A. Yes; showed me what booodle he had inside, what packages of money he had.

Q. What shape were they in? A. They were tied up in bundles; they were piled up in bills in the bottom of a satchel.

Q. Did you count the money? A. No.

Q. Did Mr. Croker tell you how much it was? A. Yes.

Q. How much was it? A. About \$180,000.

Q. Did Mr. Croker tell you who had raised this money and from whom it had been raised? A. He mentioned the name of Moloney and somebody else.

Q. Mr. Moloney is the man who is now in Canada? A. I believe so.

Q. Did he say it was raised by way of subscription in Tammany Hall? A. No; he said it was raised by the "organization."

Q. Did he tell you that Mayor Grant had contributed any part of that money? A. Yes.

#### *Mayor Grant's Contribution.*

Q. How much did he tell you Mr. Grant contributed toward this money for use in the Board of Aldermen to secure confirmation? A. Eighty thousand dollars.

Q. That was the board of which? Mr. Grant was himself a member? A. Yes.

*The Presents to Flossie.*

The next point to which McCann testified was that Mr. Croker told him that Grant, during his term as Sheriff, when he was collecting large fees, had given Mr. Croker's daughter, Flossie, \$25,000 at different times, in amounts of \$5,000 each.

\* \* \* \* \*

Q. Have you ever heard that Mr. Grant on five several occasions gave an addressed envelope to Miss Flossie, which envelope on each occasion contained \$5,000? A. I heard so; yes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Q. Then we understand that Mr. Croker told you that during Mr. Grant's term as Sheriff he gave \$25,000 to Flossie? A. Yes.

Q. Did you ever hear what was done with that money? A. Paid for the house they live in at Mount Morris avenue.

*The Mission of the Mayor's Secretary.*

It was developed that an attempt had been made to ship Mrs. Croker to Europe. Mayor Grant wanted her out of the way. McCann had it from Mrs. Croker's own lips.

Q. Now, Mr. McCann, do you know Leicester Holme? A. Yes; he is now private secretary to the Mayor.

Q. Do you know whether Leicester Holme has visited Mrs. Croker since this investigation began? A. Yes; she told me.

Q. Since Mayor Grant was on the stand, and since Mr. Croker has gone to Europe? A. Yes.

Q. Did Mrs. Croker tell you what the subject, or the occasion, or the reason for Mr. Holme's visit was? A. Yes.

Q. What did she tell you it was? A. To have her go to Germany.

Mr. Ivins—I propose now to show by his witness that, representing the Mayor of this city, Mr. Holme went to Mrs. Croker and offered her a sum of money to leave the city during this investigation.

Q. Did she tell you that Mr. Holme had offered her any sum of money or offered to pay her expenses if she would go to Germany, and how much did she say at Mr. Holme had offered her? A. Sufficient, and more than sufficient, to pay her expenses.

*Mayor Grant Tells How Poor Croker Is.*

Mayor Grant was a valuable witness. He naturally denied everything, except the presents to Flossie, which were most generously justified. He threw a flood

of light, however, on Mr. Croker's financial condition, which has since served the purpose of showing how many years it has taken the boss to rise from poverty to affluence.

Mayor Grant testified in part as follows:

"I always intended, when I assumed the obligations of a godfather for that child, to make some provision for it. I first gave the child a present of \$5,000; subsequent to that I made it another present, and whether it was \$4,000 or \$5,000 I cannot now just recall, but to be certain, I say \$10,000 altogether.

*Three Years Ago He Was "Very Poor, Indeed."*

Q. What was your belief at the time you made these presents to this child as to the financial condition of Mr. Croker, the father?

A. I understand that Mr. Croker was very poor, indeed; that they were not well off; he had a very large family, and I felt that, as I had accepted the obligations of a godfather for this child, I ought to do something for it.

Q. Did he ever talk to you about the necessity for paying off the mortgage on his house?

A. I could never say that I had a distinct conversation with him about that subject, but I generally understood that he was quite poor at that time.

*An "Old Tweed" Trick. — Croker Denies It All.*

Mr. Croker next assumed the witness-stand. As previously stated, he returned from Europe for the express purpose of resenting the imputations cast upon his honor by his wicked brother-in-law. Mr. Croker's defense was a general and sweeping denial of everything. His explanation of the Flossie incident dovetailed beautifully with the version of Mayor Grant. In all other particulars his memory was woefully defective. Of all matters relating to the financial management of Tammany Hall he professed to be profoundly ignorant.

Here was the great Tammany Boss, through whose hands every detail is arranged and every penny is known to pass, ready to cover up the questionable practices of his organization, even at the risk of being regarded by the people either as a simpleton or as a perjurer.

Between these two conclusions the reader may make his own choice in studying Mr. Croker's answers to the following questions:

Q. Has any one now in public office



or heretofore in public office ever made a gift to you? A. No, sir.

Q. Do you know of any assessments ever having been imposed upon, or asked, or collected from any candidate for office? A. I don't know of any particular assessments.

*Croker Can Not Recall a Single Contribution.*

Q. Now, is there any one man who has at any time ran for office as the nominee of Tammany Hall since 1885 and down to date whose contribution to the campaign fund, either voluntarily made or as an assessment, you can remember? A. No, sir; I cannot recall them; we kept no account of anything.

Q. Did you ever hear, directly or indirectly, of any District Committee treasurer collecting from liquor-dealers? A. No, sir, I did not.

Q. Do you know of any member of the Board of Police or any officer of the Police Department ever having contributed any money to the Tammany Hall campaign fund? A. No, sir, I do not.

Q. Do you know of any member of Tammany Hall ever having been designated to make collections from them? A. No, sir.

*Croker Buys Property in the Name of Other Parties.*

In one other particular did the Fassett investigation prove that Tweedism had been restored in Tammany Hall, namely, in the revival of the practice of purchasing property in the name of other parties than that of the real buyer. This was a favorite method in ring days, to cover up the wealth of the ring thieves. It was elicited that Mr. Croker bought one piece of property at One Hundred and Forty-eighth street and Seventh avenue in the name of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Catharine Frazier, for \$36,500, and another parcel, No. 38 West One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, for \$65,000, in the name of James P. Keating.

Taken altogether, Mr. Croker emerged from this investigation in a most battered and demoralized condition. Those who had placed their faith in the "new Tammany" and its new leader had their confidence rudely shaken, and began to realize that Tammany was again on the road to moral ruin and a second smash-up.

CHAPTER XII.

HORSES, GAMBLING, POLITICS.

*King of the Turf.*

It was early in 1892 that Mr. Croker entered the field as a turfman—to benefit his health. His first investment was at Richfield Springs, where, in company with "Ed" Murphy, he bought the old Mather stock-farm and several adjoining pieces of land, and turned it all into a 400-acre farm. He built addition to the old houses and barns, erected box-stalls of polished wood for his blooded trotters, constructed a training nursery for his colts, and shipped up \$100,000 worth of horseflesh. A quarter of a million about represented their joint possessions at the Springs.

About a year later Mr. Croker made the largest purchase ever consummated in the history of the American turf. He bought from Gen. William H. Jackson, of Tennessee, a half interest in the stud of the famous Belle Mead Stock Farm, for which he paid \$250,000.

Belle Meade Farm is one of the most extensive breeding establishments in the world. It contains nearly 4,000 acres of land. The stud comprises some of the most famous sires in the country, such as Luke Blackburn, Iroquois, Inspector B., Great Tom, Enquirer, Tremont, Lord Alister and Clarendon. There were in addition 135 brood mares at Belle Mead Farm when Mr. Croker made his purchase.

This purchase, it must be noticed, included only a half interest in the horse, and did not secure Mr. Croker any interest in the farm itself. That remained the sole property of Gen. Jackson. In addition Mr. Croker accepted a responsibility which only a very wealthy man could venture to assume. By the terms of the sale Gen. Jackson was to receive a salary of \$5,000 a year for managing the stud, and was to be allowed \$10 a month for the keep of each mare and \$3 a month for each stallion.

Mr. Croker's separate investments in horseflesh are astounding in their princely munificence. A complete list has not been obtainable, but here is a partial inventory of his noted horses, with prices:

Longstreet.....	\$30,000
Yorkville Belle.....	24,000
Dobbins.....	20,000
Red Banner.....	15,000
Fairy.....	10,000
Demuth (½ interest).....	10,000

says "Flush" and Money No Object.

These investments did not by any means exhaust Mr. Croker's spare cash. He visited Fair View Stud Farm and red \$50,000 for the stallion Thora. Shortly after that he offered J. J. McCarty \$30,000 for the three-year-old, Helen Nichols. He buys everything that strikes his fancy, for he is always "flush," and money is no object. Besides all this, he owns large tracts of stock in Monmouth Park and West End Race Tracks.

Mr. Croker has also won distinction as a blooded bettor. In the great match race between his Dobbins and Mr. Kane's Domino, Mr. Croker had \$10,000 at stake alone. He made heavy bets, aggregating many thousands of dollars more. He rarely bets less than a thousand dollars on a race, and on every racing day he stands to win or lose what ordinary mortals would consider a comfortable fortune.

These horses that bear his racing colors are not the only ones he owns. For fame, because he has an extra stable, where he has teams as fine as any in New York, which, like his Brewster equines, with their imported English harness and equipments, are unexceptionable from every point of view.

### *Gambling Demoralizes the Public Service.*

Mr. Croker's associates on the race track are the Dwyer Bros., "Father Bill" and Hardy Campbell. They advise him how to place his money and are his fiduciaries in all things touching the turf. He is also accompanied by a knot of prominent politicians, who take their part in the betting from their chief. When he loses, they lose also; but, as his resources are not inexhaustible, and, for this, there arises a constant danger of juggling with the public funds by the officials. In fact, through the instigation of these satellites in the horses of the Boss, the whole body of the public employees is irresistibly drawn into the maelstrom of gambling. Enter any public office on race days, the men will find the chiefs absent and their subordinates engaged in "horse" play. The combination of racing and politics is having a most demoralizing effect on the honesty and efficiency of the city's well-paid and underworked employees.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WHERE DID HE GET HIS WEALTH?

#### *Not Fond of "Working" for a Living.*

The patient reader who has thus far followed the story of Mr. Croker's career will wonder why no reference has been made to the calling or industry outside of politics that he may have pursued in all these years. The explanation of this omission is not difficult; it is, namely, that Mr. Croker has not devoted much of his time to "working for a living." It is true that as a boy he spent a few years as a "swiper" in the machine shops of the Harlem Railroad; that he later acted as stoker in the Fire Department; that for a short time he was part owner of a liquor saloon on the east side, and, lastly, that he went into the ice business in White Plains; but his application to these occupations and enterprises was unsteady, and seemed to be regarded as incidental to the main business of his life, which was office-holding. It was not until he took up stock breeding and horse racing that he may be regarded as having a regular business outside of "statesmanship."

#### *No Source of Regular Income.*

Mr. Croker had no source of income for nearly thirty years, save that which came from politics. The petty places he had filled up to the time that he grasped the sceptre of the Boss did not yield a rich return, and in 1889 his friend Grant—who ought to know whereof he speaks—became authority for the statement that Mr. Croker "is a very poor man." To-day, after a lapse of only five years, it is generally believed that he is a millionaire.

There is a justifiable curiosity on the part of taxpayers to know how he made his money. They have watched him move from his modest little home on the east side to a fine brown-stone house on Mount Morris avenue, and from there they have painfully observed his migration to his magnificent new residence on East Seventy-ninth street. They are deeply concerned in knowing by what magic process he has acquired his enormous fortune.

#### *Speculates in Stocks and Real Estate.*

From time to time the public has been informed that he was engaged in business speculations, such as stocks, real

estate and contracts, in which he could employ to good advantage the knowledge that came to him in his capacity as Boss. Thus it is known that Mr. Croker and those in his confidence, being supplied with "tips" regarding the prospective course of the Rapid Transit Commission and the Legislature, dabbled in Manhattan "L" stock with considerable profit to themselves. Mr. Croker is also known to have formed a partnership with Peter F. Meyer, a prominent real estate auctioneer and speculator. Soon afterward the pliant judges of New York city transferred the exclusive control of court auction sales of real estate from the Real Estate Exchange to Meyer's salesrooms, at No. 111 Broadway.

Influence over the Legislature has formed another source of investment for Mr. Croker. When the so-called Huckleberry Railroad syndicate was created a bill was passed consolidating the Annexed District surface roads under a charter that exempted the company from payments to the city treasury of a percentage on its income, as was required under the Cantor general railroad law, and also enabled it to obtain a valuable franchise from the Board of Aldermen for a mere song. Mr. Croker and his friend "Ed" Murphy were alleged to be large stockholders in the Huckleberry scheme.

#### *Drives Betting to the Race Tracks.*

When Mr. Croker began to invest money in race tracks he ordered his Legislature to close up the pool rooms and prohibit pool-room gambling, so that the betting might be confined to the tracks and the profits go to the racing associations. The shutting up of the pool rooms has added a snug sum to Mr. Croker's pile.

But all these questionable enterprises, investments and varied sources of revenue, profitable though they were, could have scarcely furnished the enormous capital which Mr. Croker has openly invested within the past two years. He has paid since 1892, \$750,000 for race horses and stock farms, and about \$200,000 for his private palace and its gorgeous decorations and furnishings. How much he has invested through dummies like Keating the public, of course, can only surmise. At any rate, every thoughtful taxpayer, puzzled by the impenetrable mystery surrounding his methods of acquisition,

is asking this question and is anxiously awaiting an answer:

"Mr. Croker, you have great wealth. Where did you get it?"

#### *Lives in High Style on Mysteriously Acquired Wealth.*

Mr. Croker lives in the style of a millionaire and spends money as lavishly as a prince.

He tendered a reception to the French Admiral, De Libran, last May, which affords us a glimpse of his household. The society reporter describes the great social event in part as follows:

"The decorations of the dinner table and of the entire house were tasteful and elaborate. A very handsome table service of the expensive Dresden china and a very fine silver service added much to the beauty of the banquet table. The centerpiece was a large candy model of the flagship *Arethuse*. This was set in oval of smilax and Waterville pink roses. At an end of the table was another large design. Every available inch of the snowy linen was covered with fragrant roses, palms and ferns. The corners of the room were relieved by the pale pink of Catharine Mermets and the delicate yellow of *Perle de Jard* roses. The dinner favors were of gold and silver of various designs."

The taxpayers are very naturally asking who pays for all this Oriental luxury? Who pays for Mr. Croker's racer jockeys, his farms, his mansion, his silver service, his Windsor Hotel bills, his crested carriages and his pleasure trips in private palace cars? The query is uppermost in every intelligent and industrious citizen's mind who earns an honest competence by honest toil:

"Mr. Croker, where did you get your wealth?"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### OPEN LETTER TO BOSS CROKER.

##### *Why His Record Was Written.*

Sir—In giving to the public the record of your life and political activity, I beg to assure you that I am not actuated by the slightest feeling of personal malice. A sense of duty to the community over which you have assumed to play the part of a "central power" whose political rights you have usurped and whose government you have degraded, is the only motive that prompts



to show the people who you really and to let them judge what they expect from your rule. If you had content to occupy in life the modest ere of a private and obscure citizen, which nature peculiarly molded you, should have left you to go your way peace, undisturbed by public notoriety, apt such as you might have invited on yourself by your occasional contacts with the criminal laws and the police authorities. But as you have chosen to exercise the functions of a ruler and have kindly and paternally undertaken to relieve us of our public possibilities—without our consent—we must expect to receive your share of that impertinent criticism to which all possessors of regal power are obliged to submit in this age of free speech and of free press.

#### ***A Man Who Belongs in Jail Should Not Attempt to Lead!***

Therefore, as a dutiful citizen of this unfortunate town, take the liberty to tell you that your training, your precedents, your associations, your whole life, in fact, has been of such a character than the mere toleration of your presence and unrestrained liberty more than our good nature should be asked to endure, while your brazen assumption of political leadership is the most revolting insult that was ever offered an intelligent and honorable people; that a man of your stamp, whose history is that of a member of the criminal class, for whose benefit jails are built, should be suffered as an alibi in the most important concerns of government—in matters affecting life, liberty and prosperity; that you should be permitted to dictate the selection of our judges, Controller, Mayor and Congressmen, and to make them bow to your will—is an indictment of our public spirit, and a condition that is at war with all enlightened ideas of orderly and moral society.

#### ***New York at the Mercy of a Tunnel Gang.***

Since you have become the boss you have turned Tammany Hall into a fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang, and our city and her taxpayers you have made the victims of the avaricious greed, the predatory cunning and criminal propen-

sities of its members. You have made a market of the most precious interests of government, and reduced its sacred privileges to mere matters of bargain and sale. The one object of your sway has been to take from the substance of the people for the private gain of yourself and your satellites, as much as they would reasonably bear without suspicion or resistance.

The organization which you control represents organized robbery, pure and simple, as it did under the Tweed regime. Political principles and the advocacy of public questions have long ago ceased to interest it. The one purpose that animates its activity is the capture and the division of the spoils of office. When it wins an election it regards the city as a conquered province, and its adherents loot the treasury, while its boss declares martial law and acts the role of an authorized dictator.

You, as boss, and the bandits behind you, have subverted all the safeguards that the Constitution provides for the efficacy of free institutions, and have trained your supporters to debauch the ballot box. To perpetuate your power you do not hesitate to encourage, reward and protect those who commit crimes against the purity of the elective franchise—"one of the gravest crimes known to the law." To gain your selfish ends you do not scruple to attack and undermine the very foundation of free government.

#### ***Blackmail the Main Prop of Tammany.***

The main prop in the vicious fabric of your society is blackmail. Vice and crime yield their tribute to your rapacity, and honest industry is burdened to increase the comforts of the shifty and worthless. A golden stream pours into the Tammany coffers from corporations, contractors, shopkeepers, gamblers, bagnios, dives, barrooms and every element that plies an immoral or illegal occupation.

(Mr. Croker, have you ever rendered an accounting of all the fabulous sums that pass through your hands?)

It is from these sources that your organization gets its corruption fund for the repeaters and hired frauds of election day, and it is from the same plunder that you, as boss, have grown rich, powerful and insolent. The example of your life must beget corruption and tempt every officeholder to become a

thief. It must teach the rising generation that official dishonesty is no crime, that official perjury is no sin, that to override the will of the people is one of the high duties of public men. It must lead to an utter disregard of law, of morality and of common decency in all political affairs. Your rule means political leprosy. There can be no political health so long as it is permitted to continue.

### *Atrocious and Abominable Government.*

Twenty-four years ago the situation under your predecessor, Boss Tweed, was exactly similar. Horace Greeley drew a picture of it in the Tribune that will be recognized as a perfect image of the present. It gives us a broad view in a narrow compass. This is what he said:

"There was never on earth a municipal structure that more sadly, urgently needed reforming than the government of the city of New York. It is scandalously inefficient for good and enormously potent for evil. It subverts the ends of the blackleg, the debauchee, the ruffian, the felon; it does not shield innocence, conserve virtue, promote useful industry or encourage thrift. If ever a thing called government were atrocious and abominable, we are living under that sort on this island to-day."

### *New York Leased Out to Knaves and Adventurers.*

Since the overthrow of the Tweed ring there has been no material change in the methods of local government. Now, as then, the city revenues are spent in a manner to secure votes for Tammany Hall, as a first consideration, and the interests of the taxpayers are subordinated to that purpose. In the employment of all labor, in the awarding of contracts, in the administration of the departments and of criminal justice. Tweed's system has been more or less steadily maintained. Now, as then, vagabonds administer justice, rowdies and greedy jobbers represent

Tammany in the city councils and the State Legislature, and this great city with its wealth, its majesty, its renown, its vast resources, its royal strength and beauty, its ever-growing enterprise and its sublimely magnificent future—this metropolis of the Western World is now, as it was in Tweed's time, leased out to knaves and adventurers.

In no bad particular have you, Mr. Croker, allowed Boss Tweed to surpass you, and in many you have undoubtedly excelled him. As his heir, assign and legatee, you wear his mantle with becoming grace and energy. If he were alive he would be obliged "to hide his diminished head in shame."

The point at which the analogy between yourself and Boss Tweed halts is where it touches the methods by which the "swag" is acquired and divided. Here the comparison must naturally stop, as in Tweed's case we have the established facts of history, while your methods, Mr. Croker, are for the present mere matters of conjecture.

### *Let Justice Be Done.*

But how much longer do you suppose the people will allow you to be an object of suspicion without attempting to bring you to account? The majesty of the law must be vindicated in the end, and, powerful as you are, you must be brought to justice. And though you may have shrewdly covered up your tracks so as to afford an outraged public no basis for a criminal prosecution, leading to your arrest, conviction and disgrace, you may rest assured that in the general estimation of your fellow citizens you will stand no higher in consequence of your ability to escape deserved punishment than if you were actually compelled, like some of your heelers, to wear a striped suit.

The people are now pointing at you the finger of scorn, and they will yet teach you that the brand of a thief may even be stamped on the brow of those men who cannot be reached by penal statutes and placed behind prison bars.



Design for a New City Hall.

From "Hullo."



# New Exemplars of Boss Tweed.\*

History Repeating Itself in the Growing Arrogance of the  
Tammany Machine.

*Present Political Conditions Analogous to Those Which Existed  
at the Height of Tweed's Power.*

## FORTUNES MADE IN JOBBERY.

Appointments and Promotions in City Departments Are Sold for Cash.

## ANOTHER UPRISING NEEDED.

The student of municipal politics who undertakes to compare the present system of Tammany government with that in vogue during the ascendancy of the Tweed ring will be rewarded by discovering numerous and remarkable points of similarity, which, if generally comprehended, would not only excite a grave feeling of alarm, but also give the impetus to an overpowering revolt.

There is in the situation to-day a great deal to remind one of the dark days when the spirit of Tweedism was rampant in this community; when rich and poor, high and low succumbed to the foul political miasma, and when passive indifference and humiliating submission became the habitual state of the people. Then, as now, the belief was universal that it was beyond civic power to overthrow the almighty boss who sat enthroned in absolute dominion over the people of the city; then, as now, the apparent strength and solidity of the organized brigands discouraged all attempts at opposition. Public spirit, hopeless of effecting a change, fell into a condition of despondent torpor. The great and rich metropolis lay helplessly demoralized at the feet of its despoilers.

### HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF.

Just twenty-two years have elapsed since that darkest scene of our local his-

tory was enacted, and we see it reproduced with lifelike fidelity. As if the lessons of that most bitter and degrading experience had been entirely forgotten, we find ourselves stumbling over the same block and running in the identical grooves that led us then, as they are unerringly leading us again, to the political perdition.

There is no longer any doubt that a new ring has been nursed into a full grown maturity—one that bids fair to revel in excesses and indulge in abuses of which the old ring, even in its palmyest days, had no conception. With opportunities immensely widened, with methods reduced to a scientific completeness, with a cunning and daring emboldened by deserved contempt for the popular will, and with a venal appetite whetted by constant though as yet unexposed mousings at the public crib, there is a roseate prospect opening up to the ringsters which bedims and belittles the brightest dream of wealth and power that ever stirred the ambitious soul of man.

### THE OLD MACHINE.

Not since 1869 have political machinists and corruptionists been so firmly entrenched in power as at this moment. It was in that year that A. Oakey Hall was inaugurated Mayor, and the mastery

\* From the authors article in New York Herald, September 24, 1893.

every department of the city and the governments was fully established. Sweeny was the City Chamberlain, Convery the Controller, Barnard, Cardozo and McCunn were on the Bench, Tweed Street Commissioner, and Hoffman sat in the Governor's chair. The city was largely subsidized and the carnival of municipal debauchery commenced.

From that period the ringleaders began to pile up private fortunes, vying with each other in a mad and jealous race to become as "rich as Vanderbilt." With giant strides and unblushing dishonesty they were drawing the whole substance of the people into their own stretched pockets, and were ever reaching out their hands in every direction like tentacled monsters—everywhere feeling for and grabbing at the money of the taxpayer.

### SOURCES OF ITS POWER.

From its earliest incipency the Tweed regime derived its local influence and power through the control of the State Legislature. By numerous special enactments, by frequent charter changes, and, finally, by the passage of the notorious "ring charter," it practically deprived the city of all semblance of self-government and ruled it as a conquered province.

The utilization of the Legislature for party purposes dates back to 1857, when the act was adopted providing for equal representation of the two parties in the Board of Supervisors.

The division of spoils was beginning to receive more attention and to grow more important than the performance of public duties. The act of 1857 was the first practical step in the development of that gigantic combination whose record of infamous public crimes can never be effaced from the memory of our citizens.

Tweed was president of that board of its ruling spirit. Under his guardianship a rich crop of fraudulent jobs was harvested each session, among which ferry leases, street improvements and gas contracts were the most abundant and lucrative. He made himself the central figure of the drama of plunder, and his influence and power in New York politics became supreme.

### TWEED IN THE STATE SENATE.

In 1869 Tweed had himself elected to the Senate, and at once took the lead at Albany. The Herald truly asserted at the time, "he carried the Legislature in his pocket." Sweeny, Connolly and Hall rendered him effective aid as lobbyists. With unprecedented boldness and the most shamefaced bribery they passed, in 1870, the famous "ring charter," which gave them "a pickpocket's bonanza"—an unlimited license to steal.

By virtue of its provisions they concentrated in their persons every function of public authority. They could levy taxes, audit all county liabilities, appoint all subordinate officials, prescribe and enforce ordinances. As Tilden aptly expressed it, "the act of 1870 practically conferred all the powers of local government upon certain leading officials of the ring for long periods and freed from all accountability, as if their names had been mentioned as grantees in the bill."

### HALCYON DAYS OF RING RULE.

Then began the halcyon days of ring rule. Multifarious devices for the perpetration of fraud were speedily invented and diligently prosecuted. Frauds were perpetrated in real estate speculations, in paving, printing, advertising and building contracts. Huge establishments were constructed for the manufacture of every article needed in any quantity by the city government, and everything furnished for its use had to go through the agency of the ubiquitously thrifty leaders. Relatives of ring members were made referees and receivers by ring judges, and drew princely fees as commissioners of award and assessment.

Tweed's fingers were in every pie. No financial or industrial enterprise could arise without first setting aside to him a share of its stock and electing him one of its officers. His greed was insatiable. Judging from the public record of the transfers of property, he was in a fair way to purchase a very large part of Manhattan Island. His will was little less than law with every officeholder of the State, from the Governor at Albany to the heads of the city departments. No one would have dared to refuse him any favor he might have chosen to demand.

## VULGAR DISPLAYS OF PLUNDER.

The evidences of great wealth in the possession of the leaders soon appeared on the surface. They launched into a high style of living, characterized by vulgar display.

Heavy diamonds flashed resplendent in their shirt fronts. Tweed built a house in Fifth avenue and a country seat at Greenwich. He and his pals caroused on champagne at their own Metropolitan Hotel and drank to each other's health from silver goblets. In the evening they gambled at the Americus Club, where they expectorated on the Axminster carpets and Turkish rugs, while reclining on luxuriously upholstered sofas.

Most of them, strange to say, indulged the expensive taste for horseflesh, and few, if any, of them failed to lay claim to a stable of noted trotters. It was at the clubhouse one evening, when a certain nervous ringster, impressed by its dazzling appointments, inquired of a brother member if he did not fear that their frauds were becoming rather too brazen. The latter calmly replied: "Let the others cover up and hide matters for themselves; that's not my lookout. I've got my pile snug and safe."

## BEGINNING OF THE END.

Exactly fifteen months after the passage of the ring charter the community was electrified by the first authentic exposure of ring frauds. With great difficulty the fearful rottenness of Tweedism was gradually laid bare.

Fraud permeated and saturated the whole municipal system. Over eight millions had been squandered on the courthouse that was to have cost originally one-quarter of a million. Millions more had been stolen through armory frauds, schoolhouse frauds, rotten pavement frauds and frauds of infinite variety.

It was found that 65 to 85 per cent. of the face value of all contractors' bills were fraudulent. For plastering the courthouse Andrew J. Garvey drew \$2,870,464.06, for plumbing John H. Keyser got \$1,231,817.76, and Ingersoll & Co., supplying the chairs and carpets, received the neat little sum of \$5,663,646.83.

The system of division among the thieves was later discovered by Mr. Tilden. He found, by examining the books

of the Broadway Bank that on every warrant in favor of the contractors Tweed received 24 per cent., Connolly 20 per cent., Sweeny 10 per cent., and Watson and Woodward each got 5 per cent. As an example of their boldness it may be mentioned that on one occasion the sum of \$384,000 was paid to the New York Printing Company, and upon the same day Tweed deposited to his own credit the check of that company for \$104,000.

## WAR AGAINST THE RING.

The contest for the overthrow of the ring was to be waged against fearful odds. It was securely entrenched, and the powers of the police, the judiciary and the Legislature were at its command. The leaders were wily and unscrupulous. The whole machinery of election was in their absolute control.

All the crime and ignorance of the community stood like an immovable rockbed of support behind the Boss, ever re-electing him to the Senate and urging the erection of a public statue in his honor. Even the press, that Argus-eyed watchman over official integrity, failed to see wherein the ring was wrong, and besides deprecating all opposition, ascribed it to interested motives.

The intelligent public also seemed to have lost its head and its ears as well for it was for a long while deaf to all appeals. The outlook was indeed gloomy and the boldest might well have despaired. Within two months of its final overthrow the ring seemed to be "more securely established in power than any dynasty in Europe."

## THE STORM BREAKS.

The storm, however, was inevitably portending and could not be dispelled. Public spirit was awakening from its lethargy, stimulated by Editor Jennings' defiant pen, Cartoonist Nash's brilliant pencil, and Tilden's and O'Connor's restless and undaunted courage.

On Sept. 4, 1871, a great indignation meeting was held at the Cooper Union. Ex-Mayor William F. Havemeyer presided. "The prosperity of this city," he began, "is due solely to its natural advantages; its growth is in spite of the negligence, ignorance and corruption of its government."

Judge Emott, the first speaker, ex



claimed: "Look at your officials wallowing in wealth and then answer the question as to who got the taxpayers' money."

\* \* The world is waiting to see if the men of New York believe in honesty or worship fraud."

Then spoke up Judge Pierrepont: "How appens it," he asked, "that these officials have grown so vastly rich? By what magic power were their sudden millions made? Not out of their salaries, are!"

Oswald Ottendorfer referred to the city as bleeding from a hundred wounds and lying prostrate under the burden of a debt amounting to over \$100,000,000, the payment of which must necessarily impose new and manifold burdens to be borne by the working classes out of their scanty earnings. "The great wealth of New York," he continued, "attracted the vultures from all directions, and the city is looked upon as a milch cow to support in opulence the schemes of corruption."

Ex-Gov. Salomon spoke as follows: "Has it not long since been the conviction of all thinking men in this community that the affairs of the city were in the hands of a few shrewd, unscrupulous and bad men banded and held together for a common purpose? Have we not seen the men in control grow immensely rich within a few years in the public service, and have we not been well satisfied long since that their riches were the ill-gotten gains of public plunder?"

#### THE COMMITTEE OF SEVENTY.

That this plain spoken and determined demonstration, whose outcome was the Committee of Seventy, struck error into the hearts of the despoilers may well be imagined.

In abject fear some of them quietly transferred their plunder preparatory to a hasty departure. A general destruction of all incriminating books, papers, accounts and memoranda relating to city affairs was commenced. The controller's office was burglarized at night, and a lot of vouchers relating to county work was stolen. Evidently they considered that the beginning of the end was at hand.

That the rulers of New York had been thieves was now universally admitted, yet the plain task of sending them to prison was not so simple. The ring

had taken the precaution to secure a judiciary that would protect them from the legal penalties of their crimes. Most of the judges were thoroughly corrupt, and as ready to sell law as a grocer might sugar. There was no court in the city of New York that could be trusted with any case in which Tweed and his associates were parties. Despite all these obstacles the great legal acumen and perseverance of Tilden and O'Connor paved the way to remedy the wrong, and Boss Tweed was finally forced to don the felon's garb.

#### ANALOGOUS CONDITIONS.

No well-informed citizen after carefully conning this recital can fail to trace the lifelike analogy between the Tammany of Bill Tweed and the Tammany of Dick Croker. There are all new men, of course, in the present ring, and they pursue entirely different tactics, but the objects and results are exactly the same as of yore.

Most of the present ringmasters were apprentices under the old boss, and, profiting by his experience, are sedulously avoiding his mistakes. Little is the danger that any of them will allow himself to be caught in the meshes of the law. They keep no accounts or records, neither do they deposit their percentages in the same banks wherein the contractors cash their warrants, in the clumsy fashion of their political preceptors.

In all their political activity they are job-and-rob politicians of the old school, yet so shrewdly do they operate and so carefully do they cover their tracks that every valuable interest of the city could go to rack and ruin without affording the possibility of fixing any single act on which a criminal prosecution could be justly grounded. It is only by some lucky accident that we may ever hope to secure evidence sufficient to indict and convict.

#### LEADERS ACCUMULATING FORTUNES.

Meanwhile the leaders will remain rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and will be growing constantly richer. They are again buying or building mansions on Fifth avenue, and indulging appetites that were once supposed to be the spe-

cial prerogatives of princes and millionaires.

Those who a few years ago owned scarcely a dollar are now possessors of city and country residences, yachts, trotters and crested equipages. Their families, gorgeous in satins and jewels, parade their recently acquired wealth at fashionable seaside resorts in Summer, and in Winter strive to emulate the social aristocracy by tendering mock receptions to distinguished personages in their city drawing rooms. Tammany is truly flourishing, and great is the reign of Tweed II.

### THE THEFT OF THE STATE SENATE.

Ever since they encompassed the "theft of the State Senate," and obtained full control of the State administration, they have proceeded on the same lines that became odiously familiar during the period of Tweed's regime. They at once parceled out the property and privileges of the taxpayers as though they had acquired them by direct purchase for private use. They have substituted the tyranny of a political machine for the generous forms of a people's government. They have put none but pliant tools into public office, so as to pervert the legitimate functions of government to purely personal and pecuniary purposes. They have steadfastly used the Legislature to further schemes of plunder and to perpetuate their authority. They have outraged the principle of home rule and punished recalcitrant communities by altering their charters and arbitrarily forcing officials upon them in defiance of local sentiment. They have supplanted the lobby and are themselves retained, for a consideration, to protect the interests of corporations. They have dictated the selection of United States Senators who misrepresent and disgrace their State. They have made the Chief Executive of the State a figurehead without authority, who humbly seeks their assent before affixing his signature to a bill. They have, finally, converted popular elections into mere ratifications of their arbitrary nominations.

### RESEMBLANCES TO TWEED RULE

Locally, the resemblance to Tweed times is astonishingly real. The rate is expending ever so much and accomplishing ever so little. By a deceptive tax rate they seek to hide their extravagance. Their appointments to office have been fitly characterized as "the worst ever made in a civilized community." A term in prison is a sure passport to Tammany preferment to a course in college. Public interests are treated as if they were a species of sport, and offices are but gambling stakes.

Of money-making devices there is no end. The laws for the regulation and repression of crime are used as a bar for blackmail, to benefit those who do duty it is to enforce them. Every possible business interest is terrorized and plundered to swell Tammany's corrupt fund.

Costly public improvements are planned regardless of actual necessity, and specifications are drawn for favorite contractors so as to preclude competition.

Sons and sons-in-law monopolize the choicest refereeships and receiverships and make "barrels of money" out of condemnation proceedings by "protecting" the interests of property owners. A horde of inspectors of different varieties and degrees of rapacity is turned loose to prey upon the industrious and on the municipal salary rolls are madrones whose only labor is performed on pay day.

Appointments and promotions in the Fire and Police departments are notoriously sold for cash, and the saloonkeepers pay—now arranged through their association—a ruinous tribute to be permitted to violate the Sunday law. It would be monotonous to enumerate the innumerable contrivances by which Tammany Hall drains the pockets of those whom the central and district bosses manage by hook or crook to draw into their enormous dragnet of official extortion. Yet Boss Croker is virtually asking again: "What are you going to do about it?"

### PRESENT CONDITIONS.

The conditions are now similar to those immediately preceding the downfall of the Tweed ring. Public indignation at

discontent, though general, are slow in crystallizing, and only await a leader equal to the emergency to kindle it into a consuming conflagration. Would that Samuel J. Tilden were with us to guide us again out of the wilderness of political demoralization and corruption.

#### MR. TILDEN'S REFORM WORK.

Previous to the Fall election of 1871 Mr. Tilden, though chairman of the State Committee and the official head of the Democratic party, confronted by a condition of which the present is a counterpart, earnestly advocated a union of all elements on local candidates. In a speech at Cooper Institute, Nov. 2, 1871, he said:

"The millions of people who compose our great metropolis have been the subject of a conspiracy the most audacious and most wicked ever known in our free and happy land. A cabal of corrupt men have seized upon all the powers of the local government and converted them, not only for the purposes of misgovernment, but also of personal plunder. It is, in my judgment, the foremost duty of every good citizen to join with his fellows in the effort to overthrow this corrupt and degrading tyranny. For that reason I stand before you to-night. If we found our dwellings wrapt in flames we should not inquire whether it was an American, an Irishman or a German, whether it was a Democrat

or a Republican who lent us a hand to put out the fire. And on this occasion, in this great crisis in the affairs of our city, caring nothing who unites with us or with whom I unite for this grand object, I come before you to advocate a union of all honest men against a combination of plunderers."

#### ANOTHER UPRISING NEEDED.

These noble sentiments, though uttered twenty-two years ago, apply with equal, if not greater, force to our own dilemma of to-day. The wisdom of his advice was vindicated by the speedy and successful routing of the ring forces; and through the loss of the Legislature material assistance was rendered to the people in their fight for reform.

Let history repeat itself in this particular. By prompt action it may yet be possible to arouse and organize public spirit to combat the organization of selfishness and venality. Let us have a united anti-Tammany county ticket; let all honest men of every shade of political belief unite to wrest the city from ring control.

There is no duty of the true citizen paramount to that of meeting this great emergency in the broad and patriotic spirit of that sterling Democrat, Samuel J. Tilden. Let there be "a union of all honest men."



# PRESS COMMENTS.

## WHO CROKER IS.

The most important of all publications concerning CROKER is the biography by OTTO KEMPNER, the essential parts of which are published in the *World*.

The chief value of this work lies in the fact that it mercilessly strips off all disguises and presents the naked and ugly truth as to the man who rules New York with the high hand of the ruffian and bully that he is.

Since RICHARD CROKER acquired wealth, not through industry but through politics, he has posed as a "central power", as a statesman, as a man called upon to expound in the magazines the principles of government, as the mentor of Congress, as an authority upon the science of taxation and as a "swagger" millionaire, traveling as a gentleman of elegant leisure in a luxuriously appointed private car.

Mr. KEMPNER ruthlessly rubs off all this glamour. He shows what CROKER is and who. He tells the story of his boyhood, youth and manhood. He shows him to be an illiterate person, a vulgar, cock-fighting, dog-fighting bruiser and thug. He recounts the story of his career in the prize-ring. He tells how he made himself master of the Tunnel Gang of thugs who once infested the Twenty-first Ward and how he employed his supremacy there in the debauchery of elections and in worse ways. He recalls the story of the cowardly and brutal murder of JOHN MCKENNA, for which CROKER was tried and and in spite of all influences not acquitted.

In brief Mr. KEMPNER shows us the real CROKER and asks the people of New York to serve what sort of a creature it is that they submitting to as the arbitrary ruler of this great city.

As a preparation for his boss-ship "he has been," says Mr. KEMPNER, "successively a th prize-fighter, repeater, sinecurist, Alderman and as a crowning glory was under bail 'killing his man.'"

In recalling the facts of this petty but arrogant despot's career Mr. Kempner renders great public service. He quickens the memory of men as to facts which they ought to bear in mind. HE APPEALS TO THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN TO RISE UP AND THROW OFF THE RULE OF A MAN REARED AND LIVING IN THE SEMI-CRIMINAL ATMOSPHERE—to put it more strongly—of gang conspiracies and miscellaneous tuggery; a man who has attained power through the leadership of lawbreakers and who has achieved wealth nobody knows how, in a position which gives him access to illimitable plunder without the least danger of responsibility to the law.

*No citizen of New York who has concern either for his conscience or for his material interests can afford to-day to omit a careful reading of Otto Kempner's biography of Richard Croker.*

*N. Y. World*

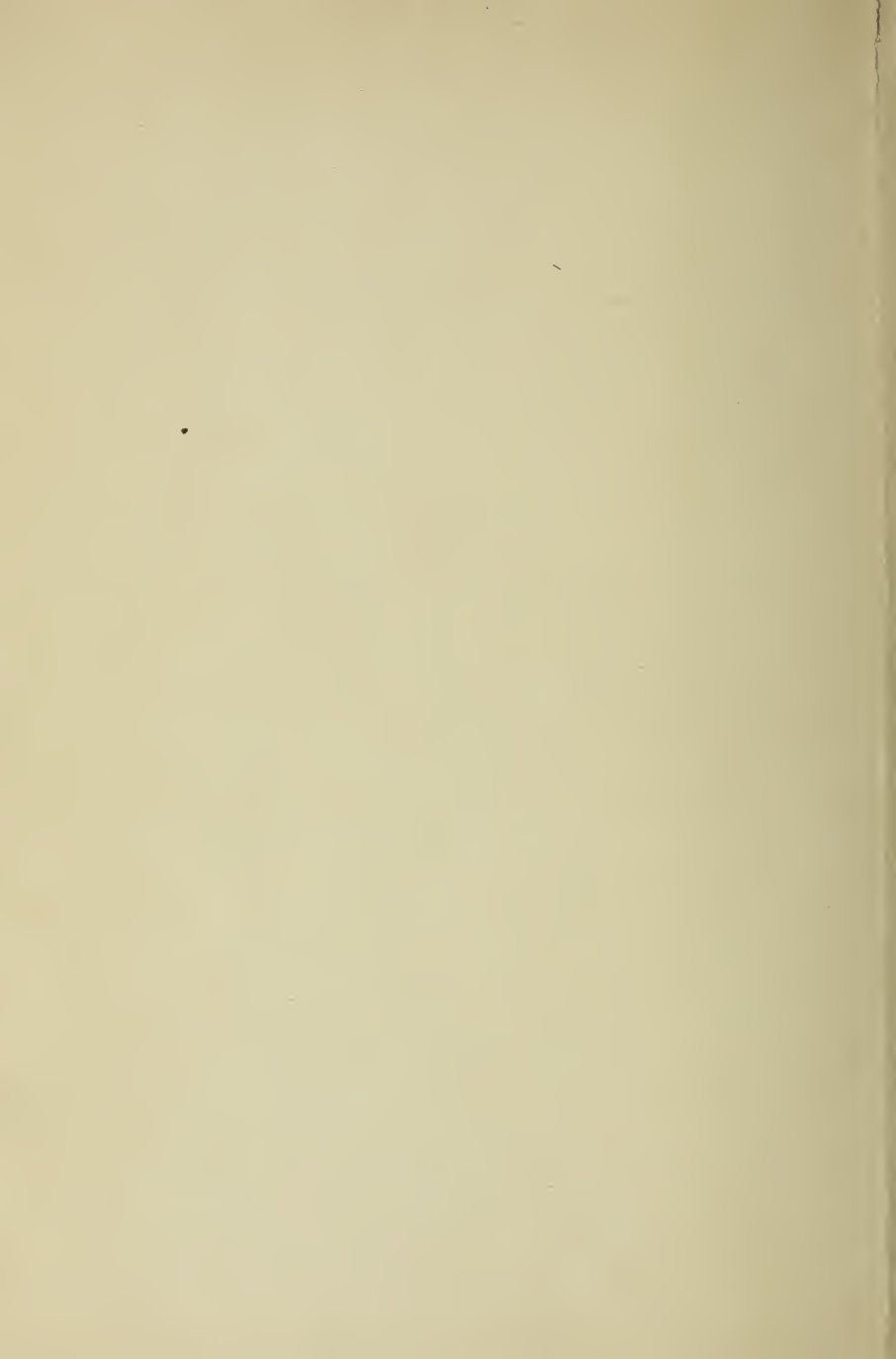
## READ AND BLUSH.

Since Richard Croker became ruler of New York, many sketches of his career have been published, but his early history was so involved in obscurity, that the writing of a complete biography was a difficult task. Ex-Assemblyman Otto Kempner undertook it some time ago and he now has in press a pamphlet entitled: "Boss Croker's Career, A Review of the Pugilistic and Political Activity of Bill Tweed's Pupil and Successor."

We believe the story as told here is quite accurate and will not be disputed, but it is an awfully disgraceful one for this great city. The account of his parentage—father an "Inspector General" in the British army—published

some time ago in the *World*, was quite mythical as we pointed out when it appeared, and concocted by some of his followers to give an air of respectability to his ill-gotten wealth. He is the son of a poor blacksmith. His life has been like that of too many boys of this city, who inefficient control by poor and ignorant parents throws on the streets and into bad company at an early age. He became an ordinary "tough" and prize fighter and then city hall politician. He fought several times in the ring, belonged to "a gang", was in many street brawls and was once tried for murder. No NEW YORKER ought to read the tale without blushing.—*N. Evening Post*.









IN COURSE OF PREPARATION BY Mr. OTTO KEMPNER:

# The Waste of Millions

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TAMMANY HALL

IN ACCOUNT WITH

THE TAXPAYERS

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A Demand for the Application of Sound Business  
Principles to our Municipal Affairs.

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*Practical Suggestions for Reducing Public Expenditures by Cutting Down Extravagant Salaries and Abolishing Costly Sinecures and Useless Departments.*

*How the City Revenues may be Increased and the Annual Burden of the Citizens of New York Materially Lightened.*